

where their values are pulling them one way and you're trying to—and the rhetoric is pulling them one way, and you're trying to cram information in as quick as you can before election time comes and all that kind of stuff. Most Americans really don't like the fact that we have disparate outcomes, and most Americans think anybody that's working hard and needs a hand up ought to get it, to have a fair chance.

So I think, to go back to what you said about talking to the Speaker on this issue, I think I'm going to try to follow this tack in dealing with our friends who disagree with us on so much. Let's see if we can't start with that and work back and see how much agreement we can make. I think we may do better than people think.

Thank you. This was great.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:45 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. The outreach meeting was part of "One America: The President's Initiative on Race."

### **Statement on Lifting the Home Health Moratorium**

*January 13, 1998*

Medicare is more than just another program. For millions of Americans, it is a lifeline. Maintaining the integrity of that lifeline has long been a top priority of this administration.

Last September I announced that the Department of Health and Human Services was declaring the first ever moratorium to stop new home health providers from entering the Medicare program. We took this unprecedented action to give the administration the opportunity to implement new regulations to create protections to screen out providers who are likely to cheat Medicare.

Today I am announcing that the Department is removing the moratorium because those new, tougher regulations are in place to root out fraud and abuse in the home health industry. These regulations will help keep the bad apples—the providers who commit fraud and abuse—out of the home health industry. These actions—combined with other antifraud initiatives and other savings initiatives—have helped slow the growth

of home health spending. In fact, the Medicare actuary now reports that the rate of increase in Medicare spending on home health has slowed to just 5.4 percent from previous rates that exceeded 25 percent.

These efforts to root fraud and abuse out of the home health industry build on my administration's longstanding efforts to combat fraud and abuse. Since 1993, we have assigned more Federal prosecutors and FBI agents to fight health care fraud than ever before. As a result, convictions have gone up a full 240 percent, and we have saved some \$20 billion in health care claims. The Kassebaum-Kennedy legislation I signed into law created—for the first time ever—a stable funding source to fight fraud and abuse. This year's historic Balanced Budget Act, which ensured the life of the Medicare Trust Fund until at least 2010, also gave us an array of new weapons in our fight to keep scam artists and fly-by-night health care providers out of Medicare and Medicaid.

I would like to thank the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice for their efforts to combat fraud and abuse in the home health industry.

We will continue to work to ensure that we do everything possible to combat fraud and abuse in the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

### **Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Cyprus**

*January 13, 1998*

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Chairman:)*

In accordance with Public Law 95-384 (22 U.S.C. 2373(c)), I submit to you this report on progress toward a negotiated settlement of the Cyprus question covering the period October 1 to November 30, 1997. The previous submission covered events in the period covering August 1 to September 30, 1997.

U.S. diplomacy to advance progress toward a Cyprus settlement continued at an intense pace during the reporting period. Special Presidential Emissary for Cyprus Richard C. Holbrooke, Special Cyprus Coordinator Thomas J. Miller, and other U.S. officials met in the United States and overseas